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CHARACTER OF ST. PAUL AS A PREACHER.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE

Society for Religious Inquiry.

IN THE

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT,

AUGUST 2, 1857,

BY

REV. I. H. LEVINGS.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.

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BURLINGTON :  
FREE PRESS PRINT,  
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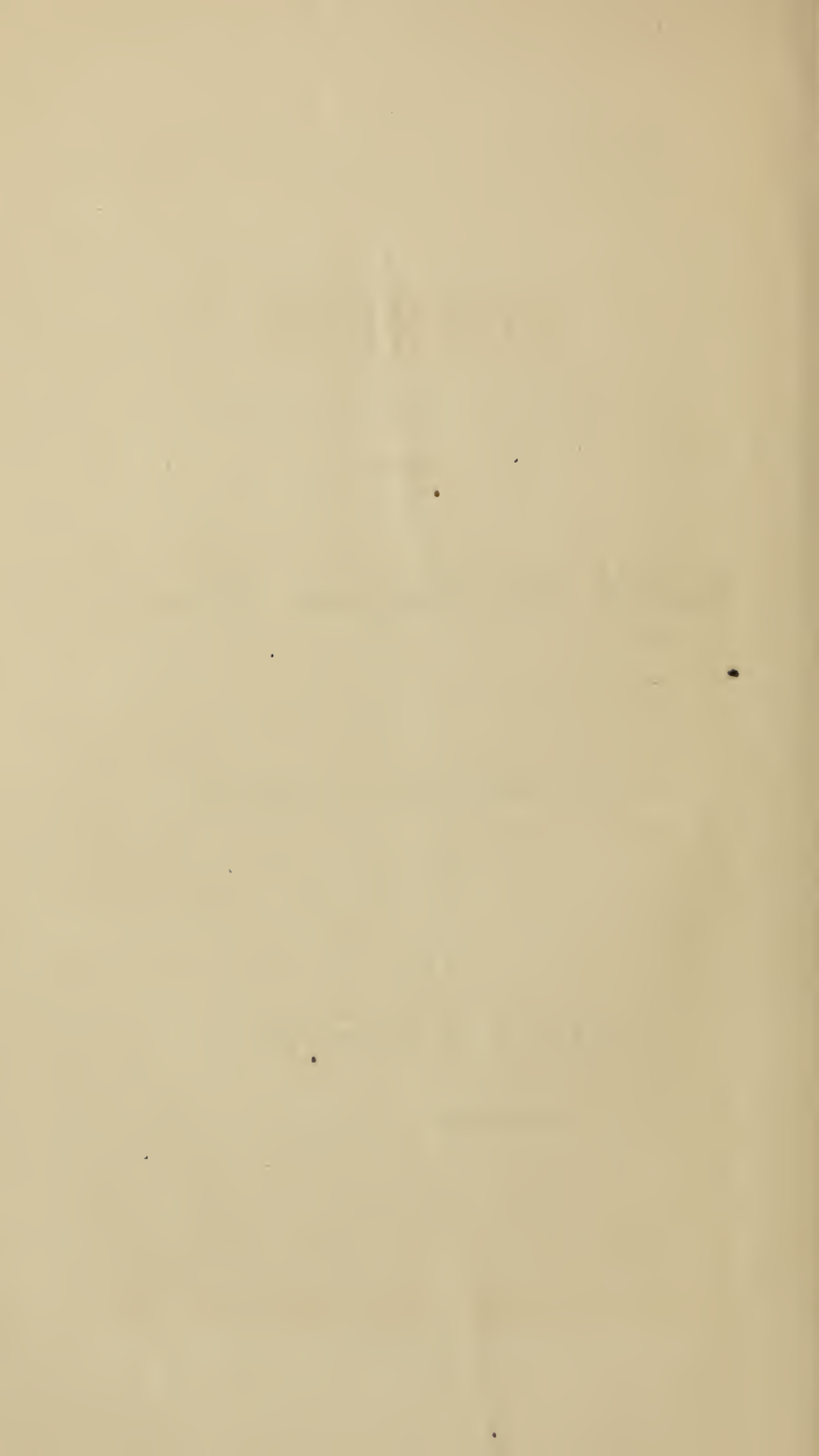
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Paul

# ADDRESS.

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I COME before you this evening, Gentlemen of the Society, for the purpose of presenting *the character of St. Paul as a preacher*; and so, ultimately, and more especially, of presenting *the characteristics of a Christian preacher for all times*. If I mistake not, the subject will be found to be not altogether inappropriate to the time and place of presentation, for that character suggests many things of interest for a man, for a scholar, and for a Christian, as well as for a Christian preacher. For St. Paul was all this in himself; and all this is the audience now before me.

For the purpose, moreover, of having a perfectly sure and safe guide through the mass of materials to be presented on this subject, let it not be thought irrelevant to the occasion, as it certainly will not be to the Sabbath evening on which we are assembled, if I direct your attention to that inspired passage in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians, in which he has comprehended, after his usually comprehensive and exhaustive manner, the whole province of his and all Christian preaching—subject, manner and object;

the subject, "Christ;" the manner, "in all wisdom;" and the object, the "presentation of every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

We shall now speak upon each of these topics in succession ; and we shall say as many good things as we can upon each of them, bearing in mind now, as always, the object of all public address, especially by the Christian preacher, and still more especially upon the sacred Sabbath. And first, upon the subject of the apostle's preaching. In choosing this one subject of Christ as the great theme of his ministry, the apostle did but comply with the direction given by our Savior himself, when he said : "Without me ye can do nothing ;" a passage evidently addressed to his disciples primarily as preachers, and certainly as true of them as it is of all Christians, as the whole history of Christian preaching and Christian life will abundantly show.

Moreover, in choosing this one subject of Christ, the apostle did but coincide with the work of the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit's great work is to glorify Christ, to take the things of Christ and show them unto his people, to convince the world of sin for not believing in Christ. And hence the great success of the apostle's preaching, coinciding as it did so nearly with the work of the Spirit ; and the promise of similar success to the same kind of preaching always. For as all preaching depends ultimately for its success upon the presence and co-operation of the Holy Spirit, that preaching surely will always be most successful, which most nearly co-operates with him in glorifying Christ. So we should naturally expect, and such we find to

be the fact again, in the history of the Christian pulpit. We do find that the line of successful preaching has been through Christ, and every deviation from that line has been more or less unsuccessful.

Let it not be thought, however, that in choosing this one subject of Christ, the apostle was limiting himself to a very narrow range of topics. For the preacher can no more exhaust this great subject, than he can exhaust the word of God ; for Christ himself is the Word of God. He can no more do it than he can exhaust the Bible ; and no preacher ever thinks of doing that, unless it be, perhaps, in his first sermon, when he does feel, sometimes, as if he had used up the Bible ; but the more modest feeling evidently would be that he had used up nearly all that he knew of it. It is with the preacher in this matter as it is with every christian. How little does any christian know at first of the infinite fullness that there is in Christ. His first act of faith, however, receives Christ entire—receives Him for all that He is—puts him in possession of all that Christ is ; and yet, how little does he know then of the unsearchable riches of that possession. But as he goes on further and further into the christian life, and want after want comes up out of his christian spirit hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and a ready supply for every want is always found in Christ ; he becomes convinced, ere-long, that, in receiving Christ, he has received an immense Being—nothing less than the fullness of the Godhead bodily. So the preacher, when he first commits himself to the great work of preaching Christ, may not be aware of what an immense subject he has chosen ; but



as he goes on studying that profound mystery of Godliness, and the subject only opens longer, and deeper, and broader before him, the further he goes into it, he soon gives up all thought of ever exhausting that Divine subject. He begins to see, at length, that he can no more do it than he can exhaust the Divine Being ; and he begins to feel something of that awe in the presence of his subject, which a sense of boundlessness ever inspires.

It is not needful, however, that something of Christ should be introduced into every sermon, as is done by the Moravian preachers, who make it a rule not to depart from Christ for a quarter of an hour in their preaching. For a sermon may be thoroughly christian and evangelical, and yet not contain such a close and constant reference to Christ as theirs do. This will be evident at once, if we consider for a moment, the different departments of preaching. Now there are three such departments, adapted to men in three different conditions of mind. There is the department of legal preaching, and the department of gospel preaching, and the department of ethical preaching. Now all legal preaching tends to Christ, all gospel preaching is immediately about Christ, and all ethical preaching runs back to Christ. Thus to persons unawakened and unconcerned we preach God and His law, in order to awaken them to a sense of their need of Christ, and this is legal preaching ; to persons already awakened and concerned we preach Christ and His love, in order to bring them to believe in Christ, and this is purely gospel preaching ; to persons already believing we preach the Holy Spirit and His life, in order to



make them perfect in Christ, and this is truly ethical preaching. We have, thus, law-sermons for the sinner, and love-sermons for the inquirer, and life-sermons for the believer; but Christ is all in all of them—the beginning, middle and end—the centre and the circumference of preaching; and all christian preaching either radiates towards Him, or centers about Him, or radiates from Him. So that the preacher can really do nothing without Christ; and that determination of St. Paul to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, has a far deeper meaning than is sometimes apprehended. For that determination, like the law of gravitation, binds the whole christian system together through the centralizing power that is in Christ; and yet, the preacher is not to be preaching about that center always, as if the love of Christ were everything, and the law of God and the life of the Spirit nothing. But he is to occupy, now one, and then another of these departments, and sometimes all of them together—law, love and life. For the preacher who would make full proof of his ministry, must be able to fill each and all of these departments in some measure.

And every preacher who has ever grown up into the christian ministry, and grown up to maturity in it, has passed through these different stages of progress. For these are the three stages through which the experience of every Christian has to pass in its onward development. These are the stages which Bunyan speaks of as having been passed through by him in the course of his ministry. “In my preaching of the word,”

he says, "I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that God did lead me to begin where His word begins, with sinners. And this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense. I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel. I went myself in chains, to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to be aware of. Thus I went on for the space of two years; after which the Lord came in upon my own soul with more sure peace and comfort through Christ. Wherefore now I altered in my preaching, and did much labor to hold with Jesus Christ in all his offices, relations and benefits to the world; on these things also I staid as long as on the others. After this, God led me into something of the mystery of the union of Christ; wherefore that I discovered and showed to them also. And when I had travelled through these three points of the word of God, about the space of five years or more, I was caught in my present practice and cast into prison." And there it was that he wrote that world-renowned book, the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is not quite correct, therefore, to say with Vinet, that "the end of all christian preaching is to cast the sinner trembling at the foot of mercy." For the third department of christian life still remains, as fully important as either of the others, and far more difficult to manage. For it requires a depth and breadth of christian experience and knowledge, which it takes the preacher years, sometimes, to acquire. The New England pulpit is said to have filled the first of these departments, the awakening, better than any other. But the old English pulpit of the six-

teenth and seventeenth centuries must be acknowledged to have filled the third department, the edifying, beyond all others. And preachers can be found, at all times, who are better fitted for one department than for another. Bunyan seemed to think that his special department was to "carry an awakening word," as he expresses it. Another is better fitted to remove those doubts and fears which hang like night, sometimes, around the christian soul, especially in the morning of its new existence, and paralyze all its efforts. Another is better fitted to build up the Christian on the foundation which has been laid in faith, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. But it would take St. Paul himself to fill all these departments of christian preaching with equal acceptance; for he had passed through them all with a thoroughness of experience, seldom if ever equalled.

Such, then, was the great subject of the apostle's preaching. And any preacher now, who adopts the same great subject in his preaching, may be sure of the following things. He may be sure of having the sanction of Christ himself for it, and the sanction of the Holy Spirit for it, and the sanction of the most successful preachers in all periods of the Church for it. And he may be sure, too, of having a subject which he can never exhaust—not within the longest life of the most laborious preaching; not if that life were lengthened out beyond the ordinary lot of man, and that labor were more arduous than even St. Paul's. And he may be sure, too, of never being behind his times, but fully up with them, and often in advance of them. For that angel of the Apocalypse which

St. John saw flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to all nations, is on the wing still, in the mid-heavens above us, with his eye on the future, having that same *everlasting gospel* to preach to nations yet unborn. And he may be sure, too, of never growing old himself and wearing out; for that subject of Christ to which he has committed himself, is Life itself, Eternal life, and quickens into eternal life everything that touches it. Such a preacher shall bear fruit in old age; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper; because he is planted by that river of the water of life, *clear as crystal*, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.

We come now to speak of the manner of the apostle's preaching, which was "in all wisdom;" wisdom in the sense of good judgment and practical skill in adapting himself to circumstances; and wisdom in the sense of knowledge and profound insight into his subject.

In the first of these senses, the apostle's preaching was truly in all wisdom. He says of himself, that he "became all things to all men, if by all means he might save some." To the Jew he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; to the Greek he became as a Greek, that he might gain the Greeks; to them that were without law as himself without law, and to them that were under law as himself under law, that he might, if possible, gain them both. He had the gift of speaking with tongues more than all; yet, in the Church, he would rather speak "five words with his understanding, that by his voice he might



teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." When he was with the people he spoke the language of the people, and when he was with the perfect he spoke the wisdom of the perfect. Recall, for example, the time when he stood in the judgment hall at Cesarea and made that eloquent defence before King Agrippa; how prudent, and yet how becoming his whole address on that occasion. Recall, again, the time when he stood on Mars hill, in the presence of the learned Athenians, with an audience of philosophers, Stoics and Epicureans, before him, and preached unto them the unknown God whom they ignorantly worshipped; with what masterly wisdom and prudence he ordered his speech before them also. And so everywhere—at Athens, at Corinth, at Rome, at Jerusalem, "and round about unto Illyricum," the apostle adapted himself to the circumstances of his hearers; and thus fulfilled the first law always required of the orator in the presentation of truth.

But let no one think, for a moment, when the apostle says that he "became all things to all men," that he had no manliness of character, no personal self-respect. For if there ever was a man on earth, St. Paul was one; and he never appears so much like himself—so much like a man among men, as when defending his rights as a man, as a Roman citizen, as an apostle of Christ. Recall, for example, the time when he stood on the stairs in the Castle at Jerusalem, and the centurion demanded to know of him if he was that Egyptian who before had made an

uproar in the city, and led out four thousand men into the wilderness who were murderers? Paul replied : “ I am a man, a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of *no mean* city.” At that time, Tarsus, the birth-place of St. Paul, was the rival of Athens for learning. Recall, again, the time, but a little afterwards, and within the same castle, when the apostle made that celebrated appeal which protected a Roman citizen the world over, and which Cicero makes such eloquent use of in one of his orations. “ Is it lawful for you,” said Paul to the centurion, “ to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned ?” When the chief captain heard that he was a Roman, he came in all haste. “ Tell me,” said he, “ art thou a Roman ?” “ I am,” replied Paul. The chief captain answered : “ With a great price obtained I this freedom.” “ But I was free-born,” replied the apostle. Recall, again, the time at Philippi, in the prison with Silas, when the magistrates, having learned that they were Romans, sent to let them go Paul said unto them : “ They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison ; and now do they thrust us out privily ? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out.” It would verily seem, sometimes, in reading these manly utterances, as if the blood of all the old Romans ran through St. Paul. He was not a Roman, however, by blood ; he was a Jew ; but he had the Roman spirit, and not the Jewish.

And the apostle exhibits the same manly independence of character, and the same personal self-respect still more remarkably, if possible, when defending his

rights as an apostle of Christ. St. Paul was not a boastful man, especially after his conversion, but he could boast himself a little sometimes. Leave St. Paul to himself, and he would glory in nothing but his infirmities ; but compel him to defend himself as one of the apostles of Christ, *par inter pares*, and he would glory in something besides infirmities. Leave St. Paul to himself, and do not trouble him with questions of doubt about his apostleship, and he would confess that he was "nothing," "not fit to be called an apostle ;" but trouble him on that point, and he would claim that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest of them." Leave St. Paul to himself, undisturbed and unhindered, to do that work of the ministry to which he believed he had been called, and he would confess that he was "less than the least of all saints ;" but question the legitimacy of his calling to be an apostle, and he would "come to visions and revelations of the Lord," and tell of a man whom he knew many years before, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell ; such a man, (that is, himself,) caught up to the third heavens, where he heard unutterable things. No, St. Paul was a man, every inch of him. If there ever was a man on earth, besides the Son of Man, St. Paul was that man. His conversion to Christianity had not destroyed his manhood. Nor is it its tendency to do so in any case. It does, indeed, make a man think most meanly of himself as a sinner, but not as a man. It does humble him in the very dust before his injured, offended, dishonored God, but not before his fellow man.

But, again, let no one think, for a moment, when



the apostle says that he “became all things to all men,” that he had no settled doctrinal belief; but adapted himself to circumstances by adopting the opinions of every man he met. He does, indeed, in some instances, appear to be a little inconsistent with himself; but a closer examination will clear him from any charge of inconsistency. For instance, he had said that if any man be circumcised, Christ shall profit him nothing; and yet he, himself, had taken and circumcised Timothy, because of certain Jews in those parts, who knew that his father was a Greek. Again, on his last visit to Jerusalem, he consented to perform certain ceremonies of the Jewish service; and yet, no man ever contended more strenuously than he had done, against all such carnal ordinances and commandments of men. But here let it be well remarked, it was not against the observance *itself* of such ordinances, that the apostle contended, but against the observance of them as something essential to salvation. Leave these things among the things unessential, and the apostle did not care how many of them a man was pleased to observe; but exalt them to a place among the things essential, and bind the observance of them upon the conscience as something oardinal to salvation, and the apostle rose like a lion to repel them and preserve the purity and simplicity of the gospel. Never does the apostle appear so great and commanding, as when he sets himself to defend the pure doctrine of justification by faith. Recall, for example, the time when he withstood St. Peter to the face, for dissembling in a matter involving the purity of that doctrine. Recall, again, the

time when he pronounced that imprecation upon any man or angel, that preached a different gospel from what he did—an imprecation that might well make a man hesitate before entering the ministry, lest he bring it upon himself; and forever keep him from entering it in a thoughtless and unintelligent manner. No, St. Paul was no latitudinarian in his belief; and yet he was liberal, most truly so, *because he was no extremist on either side*. He evidently held the position held by many wise and good men, and well expressed by Vinet; that “the first step towards the truth is, to recognize the existence of two elements; the second is, to re-unite without destroying them. Accordingly, if the apostle saw a man making too much of one doctrine, he would preach its counterpart;—too much, for instance, of faith, he would preach works, or too much of works, he would preach faith; too much, again, of the sovereignty of God, he would preach the agency of man, or too much of the agency of man, he would preach the sovereignty of God; too much, again, of the Christ *for* him, he would preach the Christ *in* him, or too much of the Christ *in* him, he would preach the Christ *for* him. And thus he would preserve that golden mean of truth so difficult to preserve against deviations on one side or the other.

But it is in the sense of knowledge, and profound insight into his subject, that St. Paul’s wisdom as a preacher appears greatest. We have it in his own words, that when he was a young man, studying the law at Jerusalem, he stood above many who were his

equals in age, and when converted to Christianity, we should have naturally expected that he would apply himself with the same diligence and success to the study of the gospel. For it is not the tendency of Christianity to destroy a man's natural gifts, but to sanctify them and make them gifts of grace. Accordingly, we find St. Paul, after his conversion, like Saul of Tarsus before his conversion, applying his whole mind to the study of divine truth ; "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and profiting therein above many who were his equals in age, just as he had done before in the law ; ranking far above all the other apostles in wisdom, so that he could say, in defence of himself as an apostle, that in the Council held at Jerusalem they who seemed to be something, added nothing to him. He speaks freely of his knowledge in the mystery of Christ, and confesses himself to be rude in speech, but not in knowledge. He does this, however, be it remembered, not in a self-confident manner, but in self-defence, and in true self-respect as an apostle of Christ. Let any one take the subject of Christ, for example, which the apostle adopted as the great theme of his ministry ; and see with what frequency, and variety, and profundity he handles that one subject ; and he will be convinced that his determination to know that, and nothing else, made him proficient in one thing, at least ; and that one thing, as we have already seen, all-comprehensive.

It is also worthy of notice, in this connection, that we have thirteen epistles from St. Paul, and only one, or two, or three, from a few only of the other apostles.

And these Pauline epistles have been the great study of the Church from that time to this ; and they have most profoundly exercised and disciplined some of the strongest minds of the race ; for there have been some such minds within the Christian Church. Probably as much hard study has been expended upon the thirteen epistles of St. Paul, as upon all the rest of the New Testament, if not the Old Testament super-added. And, indeed, the more one studies them, the more is he convinced of what the apostle himself has said in one of them, that when he became a man he put away childish things. For there are all the evidences there of a most manly and mature mind ; and hence the study of them gradually tends to produce the same manly and mature qualities in the mind and heart of the student. The apostle Peter also bears witness to the wisdom of St. Paul, and confesses that there are some things in his letters hard to be understood ; but only for the unlearned and the unstable, not necessarily for the ever-learning and steady-minded scholar. And it was the fine remark, too, of one of the Church Fathers, that the lamb can find a fording place and the elephant a swimming place, in St. Paul's writings.

But not only did the apostle himself grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, he earnestly besought his hearers to do the same. Any one will see, from his frequent use of the words wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and the like, in a spiritual sense, that he made much of high attainments in this respect, both in the preacher and in the hearer. Hence he exhorts his young minister, Timothy, to give himself wholly



to meditation on divine things, that his profiting might appear unto all. He complains of some, in his letter to the Hebrews, (which is pretty good evidence that it was written by him) that they had been Christians long enough to be teachers, and yet had made so little progress in knowledge, that they needed to be taught again the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. The apostle evidently labored to get his hearers higher and higher up in intelligence, that he might be able to impart unto them higher and still higher views of divine truth. And who will not say that this is a desirable result of christian preaching? For in this way the ministration of the word, from Sabbath to Sabbath, is exerting a cultivating as well as a christianizing influence upon the people. But be this as it may, there is evidently no want of wisdom in the subject itself—that is, in Christ; and lest any should think so, the apostle tells the Colossian Christians that in the mystery of Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” There are depths of wisdom *there*, which St. Paul himself never sounded. There are depths of knowledge *there*, which the angels desire to look down into.

Such, then, was the manner of the apostle’s preaching. And any preacher now, who would preach in the same wise manner, must have the wisdom of St. Paul. And, in order to this, he must study his great subject profoundly, as St. Paul himself did. And this he certainly will do, and must do, if he follows the law of the subject. For that law is as rigid as the laws of the Medes and Persians; and where it is strictly obeyed, as it always should be, by

the preacher, it compels him to go into his subject, and go on into it, till he has gone through it. And where the preacher studies in this way, he will naturally preach in this way. He will follow the same law in the presentation of his subject, which he followed in the investigation of it. For, as Edmund Burke says : “that method of teaching which approaches most nearly to the method of investigation is incomparably the best.” Such preaching too, will naturally tend to reproduce itself in the hearer ; for the preacher having made a clear passage through his subject, the hearer can easily go over it after him and reproduce the discourse in his own private meditation. There is no better way, therefore, for the preacher to fulfil that first law, always required of the orator in the presentation of truth, namely, the law of adaptation to all classes of his hearers, than to have a thorough knowledge of his subject. The reason why a truly philosophic mind is able to make things plain even to an illiterate hearer, is, that he presents clear thoughts in a proper order. “There is no talent,” says Dugald Stewart, “so essential to a public speaker, as to be able to state clearly every different step of those trains of thought by which he was led to the conclusions he wishes to establish.” It is a mistaken notion, therefore, that the preacher ever labors upon his subject too much. For the object of such labor, where it is rightly bestowed, is not to make the subject more difficult, but to make it more simple. “It takes all our learning,” says Archbishop Usher, “to be simple.” For every preacher, therefore, that studies his subject too much, there are twenty who do not study

it enough ; and one against twenty may be allowed some unusual latitude.

We come now to speak of the object of the apostle's preaching, which was, to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." And what that phrase, perfection in Christ, comprehends, no one who has been a close student of St. Paul will fail to recognize at once : namely, pardoned, renovated, re-united ; no condemnation, a new creature, all one ; pardoned in relation to God, renovated in relation to ourselves, re-united in relation to our fellow-men. A most worthy object, truly, alone worthy of such a subject and such a manner ; to present every man perfect in Christ, faultless and complete in him ; holy, unblamable, unreprouvable in his sight ; sanctified in spirit, soul and body. This was the great object which the apostle constantly aimed at in all his preaching. And hence the great body of reproofs, rebukes, exhortations, instructions, prayers and entreaties, pervading the whole of his writings. We have erred greatly if we have looked upon St. Paul simply as a great doctrinal preacher. He was all that, but he was also the most practical of all preachers. Hear him beseeching the Romans to "present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God ; and to be not conformed to this world, but transformed and renewed." Hear him exhorting the Corinthians to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Hear him charging the Thessalonians, "every one of them, as a father doth his children, to walk worthy of God" and of their high christian calling.



In thus constantly setting before him as the great object of his preaching, the perfection of every man in Christ, the apostle did but set before him the great object for which Christ himself came into the world : which was “to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people ;” “to sanctify and cleanse the Church with the washing of water by the word,”—that is, by the preaching of the word, which cleanses the Church like the washing of water—“that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” This was the ultimate object of Christ’s coming into the world ; and this, therefore, was the ultimate object which St. Paul, as a preacher of Christ, always set before him, and before his hearers ; holiness of life, righteousness of life, godliness of life, uprightness, purity, perfection of life. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things,” he writes to Timothy, these ultimate moral and religious truths, “thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.”

But it is the great merit of St. Paul as a preacher, under this head, that in laboring to present every man perfect in Christ, he included himself in the number. He labored upon himself with all the earnestness with which he labored upon others. He sought to realize in himself the same great ideas of righteousness, godliness and eternal life, which he sought to have realized in his hearers. He endeavored to exemplify in his own life that holy gospel which he preached to

others, that it might be exemplified in their lives also. Even as our Savior sanctified himself that His people also might be sanctified by the truth as seen in Him, so did St. Paul sanctify himself that his hearers also might be sanctified by the truth as preached and practised by him. Writing to the Thessalonians, he says: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." Hence he could exhort his hearers after this remarkable manner: "Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ; and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample." Now this shows how faithfully the apostle applied the truth to himself, at the same time that he applied it so faithfully to others. For how could he have exhorted them to follow him, and done it with a good conscience, if he had not been fully conscious of striving himself to follow Christ. But St. Paul was a most conscientious man. He "exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." And the infidel who once undertook to refute Christianity by examining the account of St. Paul's conversion, was himself converted before he had proceeded far with the examination; so evident were the marks of sincerity.

How blessed would the preacher now be if his own life were so pure, and holy, and conformed to his preaching, that he could come before his hearers and exhort them, as St. Paul did. But what preacher now would presume to do it? For there seems to him to be such a vast difference between his imperfect life and the perfect life of Christ, and so little, if any,

between himself and his hearers, that instead of directing them to follow him, he would much rather direct them to follow Christ. And yet St. Paul was not a perfect man. He says of himself, that he had not yet fully apprehended Christ. But this one thing he did; forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto the things that were before, he pressed toward the mark for the full and final realization of all that it is to be in Christ. And this is all that can be required of any preacher now. If he is fully conscious of striving to realize in himself those great christian ideas of pardon, renovation and reunion, no condemnation, a new creature, and all one, which he preaches to others, it is enough; though he may be fully conscious at the same time, as indeed he certainly will be, of coming far short of realizing all the fullness of those divine ideas. This is the way that men judge one another in other things. It is not required of a man in any profession of life, that he be perfect in his profession, but only that he press on. The old proverb: "Physician, heal thyself," therefore, does not apply to the conscientious preacher, any more than to any other man in the higher callings of life. If every conscientious man waited till he felt himself fully competent to enter a profession, he would probably never enter it. And so the conscientious preacher, if he waits till he feels himself good enough to preach holiness and eternal life to others, will probably never preach in this world; or if he preaches, he will not dare to address the heart and conscience of his hearer, but will play with his subject, and address their imagination and fancy; which,

however, no truly conscientious preacher will ever do.

This great object of the apostle's preaching, to present every man perfect in Christ, himself with the rest, is what caused him to abound so in labors. For, as Theremin says, when speaking of the sacred orator: "where will he find matter for his discourses, if his own sanctification—if the moral and religious condition of men does not lie near his heart; if he does not earnestly desire to improve human character." Now these two things, his own sanctification and that of his hearers, lay very near St. Paul's heart, and manifested themselves in that resistless energy and earnestness of character which so distinguished him as a preacher. No man, perhaps, was ever more intensely absorbed in his subject, and yet no man was ever more intensely absorbed in his object. In him, subject and object, head and heart, were together, if they were ever so in any man. He identified himself with his subject, and he identified himself with his object. He was one with Christ and he was one with his people. He did not so far lose himself in his subject as to forget his object, neither did he so far lose himself in his object as to forget his subject. He studied his great subject profoundly, not like a scholar, however, for the sake of the knowledge merely, but like an orator, for the sake of benefiting others. He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; but it was, that he might do good with it. All his wisdom and knowledge of the subject were subordinated by him to the one great end of sanctifying and saving himself and his fellow men.



This strong pursuit of the great object of preaching re-acted also upon the apostle's manner, and modified it in some important respects. For he was so intent upon his moral object of presenting every man perfect in Christ, that he did not always mind about that wisdom of *words*, and that excellency of *speech*, the too great minding of which often hinders the preacher now rather than helps him, especially in his younger years. For where the preacher stops to finish every thing as he goes along ; where he labors more as an artist, than as a scholar, or as a Christian ; where the beautiful attracts him more than the true, and especially more than the good ; where he absorbs himself in the manner, more than in the subject, and in either more than in the object, he will only impede his own progress ; and he will ultimately fail of fulfilling his ministry. He will certainly not abound in ministerial labors. But the great apostle to the Gentiles was willing to be accounted "rude in speech," and even "contemptible," if he could but win men to Christ, and make them complete in Him. He did not despise these elegancies of refined discourse, but he did not run after them to please his hearers. He evidently cultivated strength rather than beauty of expression, the masculine rather than the feminine qualities of style, and hence his words were "weighty and powerful," rather than smooth and polished. So thought the Corinthians, at least ; though some of them preferred, as they always will, the finely finished eloquence of Apollos to the more vigorous and manly eloquence of St. Paul. But the Pauline manner of preaching has ever been the successful one, as the

great body of Christians will testify. And yet no man can be the exact measure of another in respect of manner. For the manner is always as the man himself. The subject of preaching never varies, and the object of preaching never varies, but the manner always varies with the individual. And here is the hiding of the preacher's power, so far as he has any, in being perfectly true to himself.

This strong pursuit of the great object of preaching re-acted also upon the apostle's manner in another important respect, and filled that strong, deep current of thoughtfulness pervading all his discourse, with as strong and deep a current of the warmest feeling ; put a living soul, as it were, into that otherwise dead body of wisdom and knowledge ; making his manner thereby doubly impressive, and his preaching doubly effective. Recall, for example, that affectionate expression in his letter to the Thessalonians, where he says : " But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children ; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but our own souls also, because ye were dear unto us." Recall again that strong burst of feeling from him in the sixth chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, where he multiplies expressions one after the other in such rapid succession, till he seems to have exhausted, not himself, but the powers of language, to express himself ; and closes up by saying : " O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you ; our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in yourselves." This is logic set on fire

of feeling. This is wisdom and knowledge pervaded by goodness. This is truth and righteousness meeting together and working harmoniously, each helping the other. And where such an amount of moral interest in the great object of preaching, is blended with an equal amount of mental interest in the great subject of preaching, it always produces the most impressive and effective rhetorical manner, and more than supplies the place of the beautiful for all the practical purposes of preaching. And, indeed, it would not be going too far to say, that the highest form of beauty itself, consists in the perfect blending of these two qualities, the mental and the moral.

How blessed would the preacher now be if he could hold these two things together as St. Paul did ; subject and object, head and heart, Christ and His people. But how often is he tossed back and forth between them ; sometimes pursuing the subject with all his mind till his heart dries up ; at other times pursuing the object with all his heart till his mind dries up ; at one time absorbing himself in the study of Christ like a scholar, at another time absorbing himself in the good of His people, like a colporteur. What christian scholar does not know that to keep these two things properly proportioned, the head and the heart, the contemplative and the active, the scholar and the christian, is one of the hardest problems in the christian scholar's life ? But St. Paul evidently had this well-proportioned mind and heart in an eminent degree. What was said of John Howe by President Marsh, that his head and his heart were together, might be said most emphatically of St. Paul. For



with him subject and object were identical, if they were ever so. He gave his mind wholly to his subject, and he gave his heart wholly to his object. And when his mind was with his subject, his heart was with his object ; and when his heart was with his object, his mind was with his subject. He had thus all the enthusiasm of the scholar in the pursuit of his subject, and he had all the enthusiasm of the Christian in the pursuit of his object. And hence the astonishing amount of labor performed by the apostle, impelled as he was by this double-moving power. And hence, too, the importance of always modifying the rule, to absorb one's self in the subject, by that other equally important rule, to absorb one's self in the object.

This union of subject and object, this double enthusiasm of the head and the heart, this identification of the preacher with Christ and with His people, is the the whole of preaching, the whole qualification for preaching. For the one makes the sermon instructive, and the other makes it persuasive ; and these are the two indispensable qualities in all good sermonizing. The one imparts that thoughtful earnestness to the discourse which satisfies the mind of the audience, and the other imparts that moral earnestness to the discourse which satisfies the heart of the audience. The one builds up the hearer on the intellectual side of him, and the other builds him up on the emotional side of him ; and thus the two together build up the whole man. And this is what the preaching of Christ should do for the hearer, and thus keep him from becoming one-sided. In fine, the one makes the preacher, and the other makes the pastor, but it takes them

both to make the minister. For the minister is more than the great preacher, and he is more than the good pastor. He is both combined ; both preacher and pastor, both great and good. And such was St. Paul in an eminent degree ; both preacher and pastor, both great and good. And there is some reason surely for believing that passage to be genuine, in which Longinus is said to have ranked St. Paul among the first orators of antiquity. And that little work in modern times, on Rhetoric, the best of its kind that has yet been published, in which Eloquence is regarded as a Virtue, and the basis for it is laid in the moral character of the orator, and the work of the artist is subordinated to the work of the scholar, and the work of both to the work of the christian preacher, finds here its highest justification, and its finest illustration, in the inspired example of St. Paul. And the student of any kind who would imbue his mind with the spirit of that fine work, could not do it in any better way than by imbuing his mind and heart with the spirit of St. Paul's character as a preacher. For he who has studied St. Paul thoroughly, has studied Theremin in advance.

Such, then, was the great object of the apostle's preaching. And such must be the object of every preacher now, who would preach with the persuasive power of St. Paul. For where will the preacher get that moral earnestness which takes hold of the hearts of his hearers, if not from the object of preaching, in distinction from the subject ? And what other object, within the whole range of christian activity, can inspire such an amount of pure enthusiasm in the preach-

er as that of presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus? For what other object has such perfect clearness for the mind, and yet such a perfect depth of meaning for the heart? Do not blame the preacher, therefore, whoever he may be, when he sets before his hearers, as before himself, the great final object of all preaching, and urges them with all the combined enthusiasm of both subject and object to realize it. Do not blame him when he preaches God and His law to the sinner, Christ and His love to the inquirer, and the Holy Spirit and His life of holiness to the believer; to bring the one to a sense of his need of Christ, and the other to a personal faith in Christ, and the other to a perfect life in Christ. Do not blame him when he reproves, rebukes, exhorts, and does it even "with all authority." For if he did not do so, he would not be a good minister of Jesus Christ, with the great object before him for which Christ came into the world. If he did not do so, he would not be a preacher after the pattern of St. Paul, with the same great object still before him. And we believe that St. Paul is a pattern in this whole respect of preaching, as he is also in a certain other important respect of which he has informed us; namely, a pattern to all chief sinners, forever after him, to believe in Christ to everlasting life. For he stood very near to the times of Christ, was directly called and commissioned by him, and was distinguished by him above all his other immediate disciples. And he has given us, in the passage before us, a brief outline, as it were, of his method of preaching. And the preacher now who follows it, may be far indeed behind that

foremost of the apostolic preachers—and, indeed, he certainly will be—but he cannot be far out of the way.

I have now, Gentlemen of the Society, done with this inspired passage of St. Paul. I part with it as the traveller over the Alps parts with his guide. For this passage has been my guide in investigating the character of the great apostle's preaching, and it has been my guide now in presenting the results of that investigation before you. And if the presentation has been as profitable to the hearer, as the investigation to the preacher, it is enough. That character in its main features is now clearly before your minds for your own further meditation, and future imitation by as many of you as shall enter the sacred profession; subject, manner and object; the subject, Christ; the manner, in all wisdom, both practical and intellectual; and the object, the presentation of every man perfect in Christ Jesus, the preacher himself always included. And what that phrase, perfection in Christ, comprehends, let us never, Gentlemen, forget; either as men, or as scholars, or as Christians, or as Christian preachers; namely, pardoned, renovated, re-united; no condemnation, a new creature, all one; pardoned in relation to God, renovated in relation to ourselves, re-united in relation to our fellow-men. A most worthy object truly; alone worthy of such a Divine subject, and such a wise and good manner.







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